

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 DHA-02 IO-03 SP-02 L-01 NSC-05
NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PRS-01 /042 W
-----031807Z 130425 /41

R 030930Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4729
INFO AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 2891

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, UR, US
SUBJECT: SOVIET REACTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE

1. DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF USA/CANADA INSTITUTE BOGDANOV SPOKE
AT LENGTH TO POL COUNSELOR MARCH 2 RE SOVIET REACTIONS TO
CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POSITION ON HUMAN RIGHTS. AMONG
HIS POINTS:

A) SOVIETS ARE DEEPLY PUZZLED AND PERPLEXED
BY PRESIDENT'S STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS AND ARE NOW FACED
WITH "RISING TIDE OF INDIGNANT SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION"
WHICH WAS BEGINNING TO QUERY THE CURRENT SOVIET APPROACH
TO THE BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP.

B) WESTERN OBSERVERS MIGHT HEAVILY DISCOUNT
SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION FACTOR, BUT ALTHOUGH IT MANIFESTS
ITSELF DIFFERENTLY THAN IN THE WEST, SOVIET PUBLIC OPINION
DOES STRONGLY INFLUENCE LEADERSHIP DECISIONS.

C) ALTHOUGH SOVIET INTERNAL MEDIA WERE EXERCISING
GREAT RESTRAINT ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE, IT WAS BECOMING
INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN THIS RESTRAINT BECAUSE
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SOVIET AUDIENCES WERE BEING BOMBARDED WITH WESTERN
BROADCASTS AND WERE DEMANDING ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS OF
HOW U.S. HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY CAN BE RECONCILED WITH BREZHNEV'S
TULA SPEECH. BOGDANOV HIMSELF HAD JUST RETURNED FROM A
MASS MEETING OF WORKERS AT THE LIKACHEV AUTOMOBILE PLANT
ON U.S.- SOVIET RELATIONS DURING WHICH A YOUNG WORKER
ASKED "HOW CAN WE TRUST CARTER IN SALT NEGOTIATIONS?"

MAY HE WILL DROP A BOMB ON US FOR THE SAKE OF BUKHOVSKIY AND SAKHAROV." SUCH QUESTIONS MAY SOUND NAIVE, BUT THEY PUT BOGDANOV AND HIS COLLEAGUES "IN A TIGHT SPOT".

D) SOVIETS HOPE THAT IN THE REMAINING INTERVAL BEFORE THE VANCE VISIT THE ADMINISTRATION WILL TONE DOWN ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PROPAGANDA. IF IT DOES, SOVIET SIDE WILL CONTINUE TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. IF FURTHER SENSATIONS OCCUR IN THE WAKE OF THE PRESIDENT'S LETTER TO SAKHAROV AND MEETING WITH BUKHOVSKIY, THE SOVIETS WILL FEEL COMPELLED TO LASH OUT. SUCH AN INTERACTION COULD INFLUENCE THE VANCE VISIT NEGATIVELY.

E) IF WASHINGTON THINKS IT IS HELPING THE CAUSE OF SOVIET DISSIDENTS, IT IS "GROSSLY MISTAKEN", WASHINGTON'S MOVES HAVE PRODUCED WIDESPREAD PUBLIC INDIGNATION WHICH HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE MANY ARE NOW CALLING FOR THE ARREST OF ALL LEADING DISSIDENTS.

2. COMMENT. BOGDANOV'S POSITION AND BACKGROUND SUGGEST THAT HE MAY WELL BE KGB OPERATIVE AT LEAST OCCASIONALLY INVOLVED IN DISINFORMATION EFFORT. NEVERTHELESS, MANY OF HIS REMARKS TALLY WITH THOSE WE ARE GETTING DIRECTLY AND INDIRECTLY FROM OTHER SOVIET SOURCES. (INDEED, THE PHRASE, "PUZZLED AND BEWILDERED" HAS BEEN USED BY SEVERAL SOURCES, SUGGESTING THAT WRITTEN, OFFICIAL GUIDANCE HAS BEEN CIRCULATED ON THIS ISSUE). ESPECIALLY INTERESTING WERE HIS REPEATED ASSERTIONS THAT HE AND OTHER ANALYSTS OF THE U.S. WERE IN AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT POSITION, CONFIDENTIAL

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AS IF TO INDICATE THAT THEIR BASIC ANALYTICAL ASSUMPTIONS REGARDING THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S POLICY TOWARDS USSR WERE SUBJECT TO MOUNTING CHALLENGE AND CRITICISM BY HARD-LINERS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 03-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MOSCOW02891
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770073-0910
Format: TEL
From: MOSCOW
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770397/aaaadhrx.tel
Line Count: 102
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: fe0f38be-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3220411
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOVIET REACTIONS ON HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, SHUM, UR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/fe0f38be-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009